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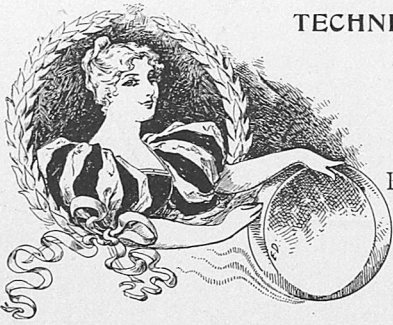
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TECHNICAL CHAPTERS, NO. 4.

TAPESTRY.—I.

By E. D.



ALL objects of Art, tapestry perhaps holds the highest place in the estimation of amateurs, or, at any rate, divides it with jewelry, enamels and china.

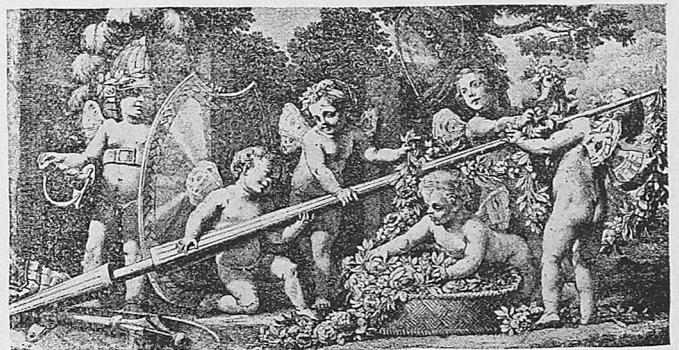
There are many reasons for this. In the first place, Raffaele and the greatest artists that have yet appeared designed especially for tapestry; secondly, tapestry is intimately connected with chivalry, and is full of historical associations—it decorated the walls of palaces, castles and grand mansions in remote ages; it speaks generally of times and things which have a romantic interest; many of the most famous examples are of great antiquity; and, lastly, the cost producing fine tapestry is so enormous that such work can never become common. Unfortunately, some persons think the last is the highest quality any object can possess.

Tapestry is certainly one of the oldest of art-manufactures, but it is impossible now to trace its source, partly because of a confusion in terms: all hangings are *tapisseries*, or tapestry, and while the word painted seems often to have been used in old times for figured, there were cloths used as tapestry upon which subjects were painted as on the canvas of a picture. The Egyptians produced tapestry at an early period, for in the book of Proverbs we find "painted tapestry brought from Egypt," but the kind of tapestry is here, of course, doubtful. The palace of the kings of Babylon, we are told by Philostratus, was ornamented with tapestry woven of gold and silver, which recalled the Greek fables of Andromeda, Orpheus, etc. Other Latin authors speak of marvelous specimens of tapestry, for which Nero and other emperors gave enormous sums of money. The Greeks, according to their usual habit, attributed the invention of tapestry to one of their deities, Minerva; Homer speaks of hangings, and represents Helen working tapestry during the siege of Troy. Amongst the Romans, tapestry was in great request, and, like all fashions, was carried to ridiculous excess when the nation was declining.

Tapestry was introduced into France and other countries at an early period in our era, when it was the occupation of the high-born ladies of the land, as it became

in our own country; but, as already said, whether true tapestry or embroidery cannot now be ascertained. M. Lacroix, whose charming work on the Arts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance we have already mentioned, says that no document authorizes us to say that the production of tapestry or carpets, in a loom, commenced in France earlier than the ninth century; the documents of that century speak frequently of tapestry.

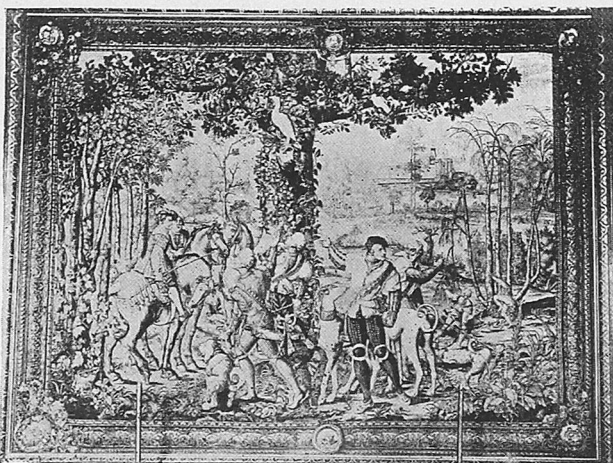
About the middle of the ninth century a regular factory for the production of tapestry was established in the monastery of St. Florent, at Saumur, and another not very long afterwards at Poitiers. At this period the English had acquired a high reputation for embroidery, or carpet-weaving, as Dudon, the historian of the Dukes of Burgundy, says that fine specimens of such work went by the name of English work, *Ouvrage Anglais*. Much more interesting historical information than we have room for will be found in M. Lacroix's work, in which are some curious colored and other representations of ancient specimens of tapestry.



FROM AN OLD TAPESTRY.

In the fourteenth century, Arras, in Flanders, became celebrated for its tapestry, which went by the name of Arras for a long period. The fine old specimens to be seen in the Louvre and the Museum of the Hotel Cluny, in Paris, and at Fontainebleau, Versailles, and other places, are principally the work of the people of Arras, of which innumerable fine examples exist. Francis I. set up a royal factory at Fontainebleau, and then tapestry was first made of any great width; formerly it was made narrow, and the pieces fine-drawn together. Henry II. formed one in Paris. Henry IV. installed the famous tapestry manufactures in the Louvre, and had a number of clever workmen brought from Italy to produce tapestry in gold and silver.

Later on three other royal factories were established—one at Beauvais and the Savonnerie and the Gobelins in Paris. The productions of Beauvais and the Savonnerie were principally—and still are, for, although not joined to the Gobelins, they maintain their character—for covering furniture, the subjects being confined to floral and other decoration. In the time of Louis XV. and Louis XVI., the style had become very conventional and the colors vapid. Since that time there has been great improvement, and the Beauvais tapestry is, in its way, perfection. Of the Gobelins tapestry we will not undertake to speak, but translate as literally as possible that which is said in M. Lacroix's work on the subject:—"Since the sixteenth century the tapestry executed at Savonnerie, the Gobelins and Beauvais, is more perfect as regards the weaving, in-so-far as it is more regular, and as regards designs there is more harmony of color and better perspective; but, unfortunately, the *naïveté* of the good old time is gone.



A Gobelins TAPESTRY. BY JEAN DE LACROIX.